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*Hey small group leaders! In our current series, “**Navigate**”, we’re discovering that in an age of endless information, true wisdom is not always available. This series is about discernment: learning to filter voices, making wise decisions, and aligning with God’s truth. Through passages about the life of Solomon, we’ll explore how to think critically, seek wisdom, and renew our minds in a noisy world. When we cultivate discernment, we don’t just survive—we thrive in the amazing life God has for us!*

Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or discipleship@rockbridge.cc

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“Start by asking: What will make God happy?”
[unknown]

LEADER RESOURCES || Leader Note *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
 - This passage describes Paul’s decision to send Timothy to the Thessalonian church to check on and encourage their faith. He’s concerned about their response to affliction (both Paul’s and in their local situation). He is thinking of others first and aware of how Satan attacks the faith of God’s people. His decision is made within that framework.
- **1 Thessalonians 3 Commentary & A Church With Only 3 Weeks of Bible School**
 - Use the commentary and short video for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **Principles For Biblical Decision-Making**
 - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

ENGAGE & CONNECT || Leader Note *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.*

Would you rather make a decision with unlimited time to think or have to decide in 10 seconds? Why?

BEGIN WITH PRAYER || Leader Note *Begin your time together by thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, beginning in a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”*
[Psalm 32:8]

BIG IDEA || Leader Note Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.

As Christ followers, we make decisions within God's **framework of righteousness**, but there is **FREEDOM** within the framework!

PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to **FACILITATE**, so keep your group moving along, encourage multiple people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have someone read aloud 1 Thessalonians 2:17-18 through 3:1-5. Have someone else read it aloud again, possibly in a different translation.

1. In v. 2:17-18, Paul expresses a desire to visit the Thessalonians, but says Satan blocked him. What does this reveal about Paul's relationship with this church and the spiritual opposition he faced? *Paul deeply loved the Thessalonian believers and was committed to their spiritual growth. His statement about Satan blocking his way shows that opposition is real and that even faithful Christians can face obstacles in ministry.*
2. In v. 3:1-2, why did Paul send Timothy instead of going himself? What does this decision show about Paul's leadership and priorities? *Paul sent Timothy because he couldn't go himself but still wanted to ensure the church was strong. This demonstrates Paul's selfless leadership, prioritizing the spiritual well-being of others over his personal desires.*
3. According to v. 3:3-4, Paul reminds the church that trials and afflictions are part of God's plan. How does this challenge the common idea that faith in Jesus leads to an easy life? *Answers will vary: many assume that following God leads to comfort, but Paul teaches that trials are actually evidence of God's work, not His absence. Hardships refine faith and confirm God's sovereignty.*
4. How does Paul's decision to send Timothy fit into the idea of making wise choices within God's framework? *Answers will vary: Paul didn't wait for a miraculous sign—he made a practical, faith-driven decision within the framework of his calling and responsibility. He prayed, sought wise counsel, and acted in faith.*
5. We can often fall into "paralysis by analysis" when making decisions. What causes you to hesitate to act at times? *This is a good opportunity to go FIRST!*
6. Paul didn't let Satan's opposition stop his mission—he adjusted and sent Timothy. What spiritual opposition are you facing right now that you can respond to without giving up?
7. Godly decision-making should be based on identity and purpose, not personal ambition. How does knowing "who you are and whose you are" help in making godly choices? *When believers understand they are children of God, they make choices that align with His purpose rather than seeking approval, control, or comfort.*
8. *Have someone read aloud Psalm 23:3.* What's a decision in your life right now where you need to prioritize God's righteousness over personal convenience? *Answers will vary: this could involve forgiveness, integrity at work, generosity, stepping into ministry, or prioritizing spiritual disciplines.*
9. Paul's love and "holy burden" for the Thessalonians led him to take action rather than just feeling concern. A "holy burden" is something that keeps coming up in prayer and doesn't feel like just a passing idea. What burden for someone OR something specific do you need to act on? Let's

encourage, be accountable to , and pray for one another!

10. Holy play”—moments of joy and rest—are part of God’s design. How can we more regularly incorporate both serious faith growth and joyful community into our gatherings? *Answers will vary: we can balance deep discussions with shared meals, outings, or times of celebration. A healthy Christian life includes both spiritual depth and joyful fellowship.*

STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Today we discussed that decision-making involves faith, wisdom, love, and perseverance. How can we, as individuals and as a small group, move from waiting for a sign to acting in faith, knowing that God guides us within His framework of righteousness? Here are a few questions to consider *as we welcome whatever God has in store for us ...*

- How does this decision CONNECT *to a holy burden in my life?*
- How does this decision DISPLAY *who I belong to and who I am?*
- How does this decision RESPOND *to affliction that I’m experiencing?*
- How does this decision REFLECT *the love that I’ve received from Jesus?*

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.

PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. You can pray for one another as well as the prompts below!*

Freedom Within God’s Framework

- As followers of Christ, we are called to make decisions within God’s word that provides the foundation for how we live, guiding us in truth and holiness. Yet, within this framework, God gives us freedom—to choose, create, and walk in His grace with wisdom and joy.
- As we pray, let’s ask God for discernment to make choices that honor Him while embracing the freedom He graciously gives us. Let’s seek His guidance, trust His boundaries, and step forward in faith, knowing that He leads us in love.